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FACA Encouraged by USDA Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative

Secretary Vilsack Credits FACA Recommendations

WASHINGTON, Sept. 29, 2021 – The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) is encouraged by USDA’s announcement today inviting proposals to advance voluntary climate-smart farming and forestry practices. The alliance is pleased to see USDA embracing an incentive-based approach that would increase demand for climate-smart farm, ranch and forestry products, while building trust that the climate benefits are real and verifiable.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative saying USDA hopes to receive proposals from a wide variety of stakeholders interested in voluntarily collaborating to test wide-ranging ideas that sequester carbon and reduce GHG emissions on farms and working lands. Vilsack credited FACA, saying the department drew heavily from [alliance recommendations released in May 2021](#) when forming the program. USDA also acknowledges the need identified by FACA to build confidence in these climate benefits by investing in measurement, monitoring and verification to lay the groundwork for success and potential actions by Congress.

FACA supports this “walk before you run” approach by government to advance climate-smart practices. FACA has long stressed that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and is pleased USDA is inviting proposals that would add value to and encourage new markets for the full range of farm, ranch and forestry products, grown and raised on farms, ranches and forests of all sizes. The alliance also supports equitable opportunities and applauds USDA’s stated goal to reduce barriers to participation for all farmers, ranchers and forest owners, including producers of color and others who have been historically underrepresented.

“Secretary Vilsack’s focus on pilots to get the policy ‘right’ will help inform future discussions and ensure we are doing the best for the environment, our farms and ranches, and rural communities,” said Zippy Duvall, FACA co-chair and president of the American Farm Bureau.

“Reducing barriers, addressing challenges, and encouraging opportunities for all farmers and ranchers, no matter the size of their farm or where they are located, will be key to success.”

Elizabeth Gore, FACA co-chair and senior vice president for political affairs at Environmental Defense Fund, said, “Agriculture plays a critical role in slowing climate change and building resilience to the climate impacts that are already here. USDA understands both the urgency of addressing climate change and the necessity of ensuring that solutions follow the science and make sense for farm, ranch and forestry businesses. This is the right next step for the department to take.”

Chuck Conner, FACA co-chair and president and CEO of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, said, “Secretary Vilsack has outlined a commonsense approach to promote the adoption of voluntary, climate-smart farming practices by producers across commodities and around the country. This announcement sends a strong message that USDA is looking for a true partnership with the farmers, ranchers and forest owners who will be on the frontlines of implementing these practices and looking for solutions.”

Rob Larew, FACA co-chair and National Farmers Union President, said, "Climate change is the single greatest long-term challenge facing family farmers and ranchers, rural communities, and global food security. We applaud Secretary Vilsack and USDA for investing in innovative solutions. An all-hands-on-deck approach is needed to implement climate-smart agriculture across the country. Family farmers and ranchers, if provided with the right tools and support, can be an integral part of the climate solution."

FACA consists of 80 organizations representing farmers, ranchers, forest owners, agribusinesses, manufacturers, the food and innovation sector, state governments, sportsmen and women, and environmental advocates. More information and a full list of members can be found at www.AgClimateAlliance.com. FACA’s original 40 recommendations are outlined in a [50-page report](#) and summarized in a one-page [hand-out](#)

Questions may be submitted to inquiries@agclimatealliance.com.

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